



Recommendation:

Restore policy, priorities, and funding of USFWS for mitigation hatcheries.

Long-Term Funding of the USFWS Trout Hatchery Production & Stocking Program at TVA Water Development Projects

Trout Hatchery Funding Stakeholder Working Group

Description

This recommendation would call for the USFWS/Department of Interior to restore funding to the trout hatchery production and stocking program for TVA waters from the Congressional appropriations it receives each year, as has historically been the case. The recommendation will require not only that funding be appropriated by Congress, but that the USFWS adjust its priorities to ensure that the funds are actually allocated for “mitigation” stocking at TVA water development projects.

Funding Required

The total funding needed each year to maintain the trout production and stocking program at current levels is the amount equal to \$906,191 plus an annual escalator (to be determined).

Implementation Strategy

- Develop a communication/engagement plan for an advocacy campaign to get the support of state and federal officials to restore appropriated funding for the USFWS trout hatchery stocking program. Clarify the audiences and the message. The message should include a problem statement, historical background, benefits of the program, and actions needed. Consider using a good public relations firm to develop the talking points and message for various media, including a public service announcement.
- Engage all stakeholders and likeminded groups in using a single message to involve target audiences at the state level (tourism, governor, fishing organizations, state legislators, local communities) and at the federal level (congressional leaders, national organizations) to secure funding for the fish mitigation program and restore mitigation stocking as a priority within the USFWS.
- Set goals: 1) legislative change – long term; and 2) executive policy change – short term (The USFWS Director needs to be more accountable to state partners).
- Consider integrating this message with a national campaign to restore USFWS funding for mitigation fisheries.



Benefits

- History and precedent – it's a very successful program that needs to be continued.
- Clearly shows Congressional intent for USFWS to maintain mitigation as an agency priority, given its federal appropriations.
- Recommendation would provide stable, adequate funding.
- Maintains angler satisfaction.
- Continues positive economic benefit to local communities.
- Would achieve trout fishery management objectives per state plans for each water body.

Limitations

- Funding mitigation fisheries is no longer a USFWS priority. Since 1998, the USFWS has been instructed by Congress and informed by FACA stakeholder committees, to stop funding the fish hatchery/mitigation program and to seek funding from the federal water development agencies that benefit from it; that is, those with projects requiring mitigation such as TVA, the Corps of Engineers, and Bonneville Power Authority.
- USFWS funding was cut by 5.2% in the 2013/2014 sequester, and more funding cuts are anticipated.
- The Corps of Engineers and Bonneville Power Authority have assumed the responsibility for paying for fish mitigation. Both agencies receive Congressional appropriations. While an alternative funding precedent has been set for USFWS mitigation hatcheries; it is specific to those agencies receiving appropriated monies.
- This is a national-level issue; the current concern is focused on two states.
- State/Federal agencies participating in the Working Group would have limited ability to participate/influence a politically-based recommendation.

Closing Assessment

This recommended approach would continue the historical, successful role of the USFWS in funding the trout hatchery stocking program and restore the partnership the Service has had with the state wildlife/fisheries resource agencies. Because of the direction from the USFWS administration to stop funding the fish mitigation program, local stakeholders will need to mount a targeted advocacy campaign to encourage state and federal legislators to change the USFWS administration's position on funding priorities and/or to seek additional Congressional funding. The timing may be right for this because of the upcoming election, and the possibility of joining with a national-level campaign to restore funding to the USFWS mitigation hatchery program.



Recommendation:

USFWS and TVA form a partnership to fund USFWS costs to produce and stock trout at TVA facilities.

Long-Term Funding of the USFWS Trout Hatchery Production & Stocking Program at TVA Water Development Projects

Trout Hatchery Funding Stakeholder Working Group

Description

This recommendation calls for the USFWS and TVA to form a partnership to co-fund the USFWS's costs to produce and stock trout at TVA water development projects.

Funding Required

The total funding needed each year to maintain the trout production and stocking program at current levels is the amount equal to \$906,191 plus an annual escalator (to be determined).

Implementation Strategy

- USFWS and TVA meet to determine the cost allocation of the program.
- Each agency is responsible for determining their source(s) of revenue for the program.
- Develop an agreement clearly specifying the responsibility of each party.
- Craft a message explaining the approach to management, ratepayers, and the public.

Benefits

- Continues a very successful program.
- Cost shares the mitigation fisheries program.
- Would provide stable, adequate funding.
- Maintains angler satisfaction.
- Continues positive economic benefit to local communities.
- Would achieve trout fishery management objectives per state plans for each water body.

Limitations

- Funding mitigation fisheries is no longer a USFWS priority. Since 1998, the USFWS has been instructed by Congress and informed by FACA stakeholder committees, to stop funding the fish hatchery/mitigation program and to seek funding from the federal water development agencies that benefit from it; that is, those with projects requiring mitigation such as TVA, the Corps of Engineers, and Bonneville Power Authority.



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- USFWS funding was cut by 5.2% in the 2013/2014 sequester, and more funding cuts are anticipated.
 - The Corps of Engineers and Bonneville Power Authority have assumed the responsibility for paying for fish mitigation. Both agencies receive Congressional appropriations. While an alternative funding precedent has been set for USFWS mitigation hatcheries; it is specific to those agencies receiving appropriated monies.
 - TVA does not receive Congressional appropriations and will have to fund the mitigation program through ratepayer revenue and/or user fees.

Closing Assessment

This approach would establish a new cost-sharing funding model for the USFWS and TVA; a federal entity that does not receive the appropriated (taxpayer) monies that other federal agencies receive to pay for mitigation stocking programs. This avoids passing along additional costs for the program to anglers and minimizes the burden on TVA customers; both of whom, as federal taxpayers, are already paying to subsidize mitigation stocking at Corps facilities in Tennessee and Georgia. Obtaining funds from USFWS will require a change in the Service's priorities on mitigation funding for TVA waters and recognition that a funding mechanism should be tailored differently for an entity that does not receive appropriated monies. Involvement of state and federal legislators may be needed in effectuating this change/recognition.



Recommendation:

Develop multi-source funding partnership (USFWS, TVA, states) to fund USFWS & TWRA cost to produce and stock trout at TVA facilities

Long-Term Funding of the USFWS Trout Hatchery Production & Stocking Program at TVA Water Development Projects

Trout Hatchery Funding Stakeholder Working Group

Description

This recommendation envisions the TVA, States of Tennessee and Georgia (e.g., tourism, economic development), and USFWS would cooperate to provide funding for the trout stocking program for TVA facilities. Funds would come from Congressional appropriations, TVA customers, appropriations from TN & GA state governments (general funds), resource agencies (TWRA & GADNR), and local communities (e.g., possible re-direction TVA payments in lieu of taxes to local counties that benefit from the program).

Funding Required

The Working Group thought this type of leveraged funding arrangement could provide the opportunity to not only obtain the funding needed each year (\$906,191) to maintain the USFWS's trout production and stocking program; but also to offset similar costs TWRA incurs (\$400,000) for its stocking program at TVA water development projects. Thus, the total funding needed each year to maintain the trout production and stocking program at current levels is the amount equal to \$1,306,191 million plus an annual escalator (to be determined).

Implementation Strategy

- Identify and convene all potential funding partners to determine their willingness to participate and how to divide the cost (stakeholders thought that TVA and USFWS should bear a greater proportion of costs). Each agency will need flexibility in determining the sources of the funds they will contribute.
- Develop written agreements with all funding entities clearly defining the responsibilities of each.
- Carefully craft the message about this option for agency management and the public.

Benefits

- Shared funding lessens the fiscal impact on a sole agency.
- Continues a very successful program.
- Potential for adequate funding.



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- Maintains angler satisfaction.
 - Continues positive economic benefit to local communities.
 - Would achieve trout fishery management objectives per state plans for each water body.

Limitations

- Shared funding increases the fiscal impact on all new funding partners.
- A multiple entity funding solution may be more difficult to sustain year-to-year because each agency is strapped for funds and the leadership (political and administrative) changes over time.
- TVA is willing to participate, but wants to minimize the impact on its customers.
- TWRA is concerned that this partnership arrangement will create a bad precedent with the Corps of Engineers for paying for a fish stocking program in Tennessee (Corps will want similar funding arrangement).
- Funding mitigation fisheries is no longer a USFWS priority. Since 1998, the USFWS has been instructed by Congress and informed by FACA stakeholder committees, to stop funding the fish hatchery/mitigation program and to seek funding from the federal water development agencies that benefit from it; that is, those with projects requiring mitigation such as TVA, the Corps of Engineers, and Bonneville Power Authority.

Closing Assessment

This recommendation could result in a shared burden among funding partners; but would likely be the most difficult to negotiate, administer and maintain over time.



Recommendation:

TVA assumes full responsibility for USFWS cost to produce and stock trout at TVA facilities

Long-Term Funding of the USFWS Trout Hatchery Production & Stocking Program at TVA Water Development Projects

Trout Hatchery Funding Stakeholder Working Group

Description

TVA would assume responsibility for the annual cost incurred for the USFWS to stock trout at TVA facilities. The funds will come from TVA ratepayers and/or user fees. Another funding option is to subsidize electric utilities for the hatcheries.

Funding Required

The total funding needed each year to maintain the trout production and stocking program at current levels is the amount equal to \$906,191 plus an annual escalator (to be determined).

Implementation Strategy

- Look at the sources of revenue cost recovery and method of collection (e.g., surcharge or other measures, such as cost efficiencies gained from other programs)
- Develop appropriate message/approach for TVA funding to communicate to customers and the general public.

Benefits

- Stable, adequate funding could be provided.
- Would continue a very successful program.
- Maintains angler satisfaction.
- Continues positive economic benefit to local communities.
- Would achieve trout fishery management objectives per state plans for each water body

Limitations

- TWRA believes that tailwater use fees, if implemented as a TVA cost recovery method, would have negative impacts on the fisheries program, angler satisfaction, and economic benefits.



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- TVA believes that it has fully mitigated the impacts of its water development projects via the social and economic benefits derived from these projects and should not have to pay for the trout production and stocking program, at least in its entirety.
 - The precedent has been set by the Corps of Engineers and Bonneville Power Administration, who have accepted responsibility for funding the USFWS cost for fish mitigation. Both agencies receive federal appropriations.
 - TVA does not receive federal appropriations, so the cost would have to be borne by TVA customers.

Closing Assessment

This recommended approach would require TVA to solely fund the USFWS for trout production. This recommendation has the potential of providing stable, long-term funding for the trout production and stocking program. However, the cost would be borne by TVA customers; many of whom are not trout anglers and will not readily see personal benefits of the coldwater releases and trout stocking program. TVA will have to determine the appropriate cost recovery method and develop a good communications plan.
